

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Remarks on Signing the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 and the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act

June 30, 2016

Well, even in the midst of political season, every once in a while, Congress moves forward on something that is really significant and important. And I want to make sure that the American public are aware of what I'm going to be signing here today.

The first piece of legislation relates to the Freedom of Information Act. As all of you know, the Freedom of Information Act is one of the key ways in which citizens are able to find out what exactly is going on in Government. And the good news is, is that over the course of my Presidency, we have processed more FOIA requests—Freedom of Information requests—than ever before. And we have worked to make it easier and more transparent, putting more and more stuff online.

But having said all that, we're actually getting many more requests for FOIA than ever before. And so we've had to figure out ways that we can reform this to make it easier, faster, cheaper for people to get the information that they want.

Fortunately, Congress—on a bipartisan basis—has provided the tools, through legislation, to codify some of the reforms we've already made and to expand more of these reforms so that Government is more responsive. And I am very proud of all the work we've done to try to make Government more open and responsive, but I know that people haven't always been satisfied with the speed with which they're getting responses and requests. Hopefully, this is going to help, and it will be an important initiative for us to continue on the reform path.

So I'm going to sign that right now.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

The second piece of legislation relates to the crisis that we're seeing in Puerto Rico. We've got millions of our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico who have been suffering under one of the worst financial crises, fiscal crises in memory. And as a consequence of the inability for them to restructure their debt, you've seen hospitals unable to operate, ambulances shutting down, basic services shutting down, and government workers not being paid. It has brought enormous hardship to Puerto Rico.

Through some amazing work by our Treasury Department, our legislative staff, and a bipartisan effort in both the House and the Senate, we finally have legislation that at least is going to give Puerto Rico the capacity, the opportunity to get out from under this lingering uncertainty with respect to their debt and start stabilizing government services and to start growing again.

It's not, in and of itself, going to be sufficient to solve all the problems that Puerto Rico faces, but it is a important first step on the path of creating more stability, better services, and greater prosperity over the long term for the people of Puerto Rico.

So I want to thank all four leaders in Congress for the hard work in getting this to my desk. And I want to let the people of Puerto Rico know that although there's still some tough work that we're going to have to do to dig Puerto Rico out of the hole that it's in, this indicates how committed my administration is to making sure that they get the help they need. And it's not

going to stop here; we've got to keep on working to figure out how we promote the long-term growth and sustainability that's so desperately needed down there. But the people of Puerto Rico need to know that they're not forgotten, that they're part of the American family. And Congress's responsiveness to this issue—even though this is not a perfect bill—at least moves us in the right direction.

[The President signed the bill.]

Okay, thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:36 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. S. 337, approved June 30, was assigned Public Law No. 114–185. S. 2328, approved June 30, was assigned Public Law No. 114–187.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, signing remarks; Bill Signings and Vetoes : Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act, signing remarks.

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Names: McConnell, A. Mitchell; Pelosi, Nancy; Reid, Harry M.; Ryan, Paul D.

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